



07/31/00

THE COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231

Case Docket No. 246/68

Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of

Inventor: MOSHE GEFEN, SHUKA ZERNOVIZKY, AMIR BAN

For : SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ENABLING NON-VOLATILE MEMORY TO EXECUTE CODE WHILE OPERATING AS A DATA STORAGE/PROCESSING DEVICE

Enclosed are

- ☒ 2 sheets of formal drawing(s).
- ☒ An assignment of the invention to M-SYSTEMS, FLASH DISK PIONEERS LTD.
- ☐ A certified copy of a \_\_\_\_\_ application.
- ☒ An associate power of attorney.
- ☒ A verified statement to establish small entity status under 37 CFR 1.9 and 37 CFR 1.27.
- ☐ Other - \_\_\_\_\_

The filing fee has been calculated as shown below:

	(Col.1)	(Col.2)
FOR:	NO FILED	NO EXTRA
BASIC FEE		
TOTAL CLAIMS	16 - 20=	
INDEP CLAIMS	1 - 3=	1
Record of Assignment		40

If the difference in Col.1 is less  
than zero, enter "0" in Col.2

SMALL ENTITY	
RATE	FEE
	\$ 345
x9=	\$
x39	\$ 39
	\$ 40
TOTAL	\$

OTHER THAN A SMALL ENTITY	
RATE	FEE
	\$ 690
x18=	\$
x78	\$
	\$
TOTAL	\$

- ☒ Please charge my Deposit Account No. 06-2140 in the amount of \$ 424. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed
- ☐ A check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_ to cover the filing fee is enclosed.
- ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of the following fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 06-2140 A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.
- ☒ Any additional filing fees required under 37 CFR 1.16.
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- ☐ The issue fee set in 37 CFR 1.18 at or before mailing of the Notice of allowance, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.311(b).
- ☒ Any filing fees under 37 CFR 1.16 for presentation of extra claims

Respectfully,

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09/629966



07/31/00

## SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN - NEW APPLICATION

Attorney Docket No.: 245/00

## IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In RE Application of: MOSHE GEFEN, SHUKA ZERNOVIZKY, AMIR BAN

Filed Concurrently Herewith

For: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ENABLING NON-VOLATILE MEMORY TO EXECUTE CODE WHILE OPERATING AS A DATA STORAGE/PROCESSING DEVICEVERIFIED STATEMENT UNDER 37 CFR 1.27  
CLAIMING STATUS AS A SMALL ENTITY

To The Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks:

I hereby declare that:

I am the owner of, or an official empowered to act on behalf of, the small business concern identified below:

Name of Concern: M-SYSTEMS, FLASH DISK PIONEERS LTD.Address: ATIDIM INDUSTRIAL PARK TEL AVIV 61550, ISRAEL

The small business concern identified above, together with its affiliates, employs fewer than 500 persons and qualifies as a small business concern as defined in 37 CFR 1.9(c) for purposes of paying reduced fees under 35 USC § 41(a) and § 41(b) to the Patent and Trademark Office with regard to the above-entitled invention described in the specification filed herewith.

Rights under contract or law have been conveyed to and remain with the small business concern identified above with regard to the above entitled invention.

If the rights held by the small business concern are not exclusive, each other party having rights to the invention is listed below, and no rights to the invention are held by any party who could not qualify as a small entity under 37 CFR 1.9(f), namely any person who could not be classified as an independent inventor under 37 CFR 1.8(c) if that person had made the invention, or any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(e) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9(a).

Full Name (Party 1): NONE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: ☐ Individual☐ Small Business  
Concern☐ Nonprofit  
Organization

Full Name (Party 2): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: ☐ Individual☐ Small Business  
Concern☐ Nonprofit  
Organization

I acknowledge the duty under 37 CFR 1.28(b) to file, in this application, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the issue fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application and any patent issuing thereon.

Amir Mergel  
Name of Person Signing

Signature

Date

Capacity of Person Signing: EVP Business DevelopmentAddress of Person Signing: POB 58016 Tel Aviv Israel 61580

## **APPLICATION FOR PATENT**

**Inventors: Moshe Gefen, Shuka Zernovizky, Amir Ban**

**Title: System and method for enabling non-volatile memory to execute code while operating as a data storage/processing device.**

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## **FIELD AND BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention relates to a system for enabling non-volatile memory to execute code while operating as a data storage device.

The primary usage of non-volatile memory is for code execution. In the market of non-volatile code storage memory, flash memory is replacing the ROM various families (ROM ,PROM ,EPROM ,EEPROM) due to its better cost-structure, ease of manufacturing and high densities. Flash is commonly used both as a stand-alone device and as embedded memory. The competition in this market concentrates on condensing the bits of information in a smaller silicon area in order to reduce the cost of the devices. The most common flash type used for code execution is known as NOR Flash. The NOR Flash enables random access to each of its addresses and hence enables to execute code from it. For this reason the NOR Flash is known as an XIP memory, where XIP stands for eXecutable In Place.

While we discussed so far the usage of flash memory for code execution, another emerging market for flash memory is starting to grow and become dominant- the data storage market. Data storage applications require a file system management on the flash memory. Flash memory used for data storage is called a Flash disk and is composed of H/W (flash memory) and a S/W package (file system management, OS interface etc.).

Modern applications usually require flash memory for both code execution and data storage. Today, most architectures use separated devices (or sets of devices) for each functionality. It is very desirable to use the same device (single device) to store both the data and the code of the application. The main benefits are:

- 5 reducing real estate requirements, chip count, silicon size and power consumption.

The following scenario illustrates the main problem with this approach:

lets assume that there are two tasks running under the OS in the application.

- The first task (T1) is the data storage driver task. It is responsible of storing all the application data on the flash memory. The second task (T2) is some code which is
- 10 executed from the flash memory (the same flash memory, of course).

- The scenario begins with T1 issuing an erase command to some area of the flash memory, as part of the data management requirements. Typical erase time of NOR
- Flashes is 1 sec. During this period of time (within this 1 sec), OS gives T2 a time slot and T2 starts executing code from the flash memory. At this moment the operation will
- 15 fail and cause the whole application to fail. The reason is that the flash memory is not available for read operations (e.g., execution of code) while it's busy erasing/
- programming another section. The OS and T2 are unaware of the fact that the flash isn't available now. The OS and T2 expect that the code stored on the flash will always be available for execution, but this is not the case. As explained above, there are many cases
- 20 when the flash is not available for execution of the stored code. In fact – it will be unavailable every time it's busy erasing/programming sections following T1 requests.

#### **Known solutions:**

1. Using two devices, one for data storage and the second as code storage (XIP). As

mentioned above, this is the most common architecture that is in use today. See FIGURE 1 for a graphic description of this solution.

This solution has drawbacks of higher real estate requirements, chip count, silicon size and power consumption.

2. Using a single device with multi-bank architecture, which can be simultaneously accessed for read and erase/program. Several flash vendors have started to offer flash devices with multi-bank (usually dual-bank) architecture. With this approach the real estate requirements are reduced and also the chip count is reduced to one. The disadvantage of this solution is the overhead of the silicon (due to the multi-bank design). The estimated cost overhead of this design over a regular design is 30%, so basically one has to pay for the additional functionality with silicon. This solution gains popularity only in real-estate-critical applications, because otherwise it is cost prohibitive. See FIGURE 2 for a graphic illustration of this solution.

3. Using a single device with a special system S/W that controls and schedules all the tasks of the system, for example, in Intel's PSM. This solution uses the S/W commands of suspend and resume of the flash in order to enable the dual functionality of the device. With this solution the problem of unawareness is solved, but the cost is the complicated integration. This requires a solution to be tailored specifically for every CPU and/or OS. The special system S/W is added to the OS and controls and schedules all tasks and interrupts. The time of integration and development of this solution is excessively long since the complexity is high. In addition this is a very intrusive approach, which might suit some niche markets.

There is thus a widely recognized need for, and it would be highly advantageous to have, a system that can enable true simultaneous usage of non-volatile memory for both code execution and data storage.

The present invention provides another approach to solve the problem of one non-volatile (flash) device (or a set of devices) used both for data storage/processing and code execution. The solution enables proper functionality of both usages and in particular will enable execution of code from the flash at any time, including times when the flash is busy erasing/programming some sections.

The present invention is of a hardware application that enables flash memory devices to be both created and operated in an efficient manner, enabling usage of Flash memory for code execution and data storage/processing concurrently.

### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

According to the present invention there is provided a system for enabling usage of non-volatile memory, and in particular flash memory, for code execution and data storage/processing, comprising:

CPU/Bus/Controller;  
Non volatile array;  
non volatile device circuitry; and  
logic circuit

where said logic circuit is a hardware mechanism that enables supporting of automatic suspend and resume operations.

The present invention provides for designing and implementing an on-chip H/W mechanism that can support an automatic suspend and resume operations. This solution will enable easy integration to any CPU/OS.

The present invention enables a non-volatile memory chip, such as a flash memory chip, to process code execution while it is processing erase/program operations. This is achieved by sensing the operation status of the chip and the CPU/Bus activity, and commanding the flash memory device to suspend and/or resume program/erase operations at appropriate times, so as not to collide with read requests. The system thereby buffers the CPU/Bus/Controller from executing read commands while the chip is processing program/erase operations.

#### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING**

The invention is herein described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIGURE 1 is an illustration of the most common current solution, two separate devices are incorporated into the memory chip for the purposes of code execution and data processing.

FIGURE 2 illustrates an alternative solution to achieving both code execution and data processing in a Flash memory chip, wherein multi-bank architecture is used.

FIGURE 3 illustrates the basic operation of the system according to the present invention.

FIGURE 4 is a flow chart of the basic components of the system according to the present invention.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

The present invention is of a system and method for enabling simultaneous usage of code execution and data storage and processing using non-volatile memory chips.

Specifically, the present invention can be used to execute code on flash chips, while concurrently processing stored data on the same chip. This is based on the usage of automatic suspend and automatic resume operations.

The principles and operations of such a system according to the present invention may be better understood with reference to the drawing, and the accompanying descriptions, wherein:

FIGURES 3 and 4 illustrate the basic components and operations of the current invention in its preferred usage. The hardware mechanism of the present invention, which is one logic circuit (or a few circuits), is designed so as to enable automatic suspend and automatic resume of program and/or erase operations in the following manner. For example, consider that there is an active erase/ program command **10** issued to the memory device. The memory device is executing the erase/program operation **15** and at the same time a read request **11** is registered. As opposed to current methods whereby the read request will be unable to be executed, and may crash the system, the present invention temporarily suspends **12** the program/erase operation **15**. When in suspend mode **12**, the CPU/Bus is free to continue with the read requests. The read operation will subsequently be monitored in order to detect a timeout **13** (a predetermined period of



time in which no read operation is done. Upon detection it automatically gives a command to resume operations **14**, allowing the program/erase operation **15** to continue.

In greater detail, the system operates as follows:

1. Automatic execution of suspend operation operates on the following conditions:

1.1 The device is busy with erase/program operation **15**.

1.2 A read attempt is being done from the device **11**.

2. Indication of the device entering the suspend state **12** (the time known as suspend latency) is provided with a busy signal **22** (Figure 4). The Busy signal, which is some physical signal to the CPU/Bus, will be used on the platform to signal that the code, stored on the flash chip, is about to be available for execution. The host CPU/Bus/Controller **20** or host Bus **21** uses this signal to hold/retry operation using its standard hold/retry mechanisms, or any other means provided by the CPU/Bus/Controller to prevent a crash due to a failed read attempt.

3. Automatic execution of resume operation **14** upon completion of all the read cycles.

Completion will be detected using timeout detection **13** (a predetermined period of time in which no read operation is done). The execution of the resume operation may be commanded based on alternative factors, such as a predetermined time interval or any other chosen method.

#### **Advantages:**

First of all, this invention enables using one non-volatile chip, or chip banks acting as unified chips, for both data storage/processing and code execution. By doing this it enables significant reduction of real estate requirements, chip count, silicon size and power consumption. Comparing this invention to the other solution in the market,

Intel PSM (other solutions: a. and b. have a much higher cost) points to the fact that the big advantage here is the easy integration of the flash device (H/W and S/W) to the platform environment (CPU, Bus and OS). With this solution there is no need to interfere with the OS components (e.g. scheduler) and other software ingredients. The OS and all the tasks running under it are totally unaware of the flash memory condition and they can access it regardless of its condition. The only integration required is a simple H/W integration of to allow the CPU, Bus or Controller to hold/retry operations that occur during the suspend latency time. This hardware integration requires the implementation of a regular and common hold/retry mechanism, or any other mechanism existing on the CPU/Bus that can delay execution of a read/fetch cycle. In order to achieve this signaling and enabling dual operation of data storage and code execution on a single chip, the logic circuit needs to be either imbedded in the memory chip or added as an external logic, to facilitate the automatic resume and suspend.

#### Automatic suspend mechanism:

This section explains the mechanism and implementation of the automatic suspend feature. The automatic suspend logic **26** (Fig 4) is operated when an erase or program operation begins **15** (Fig 3). When detecting one of these operations (erase or program) the automatic suspend logic **26** is triggered. From this moment onwards, the logic waits for a read operation **11** from the device (read operations that requires the device to output real data as opposed to status bits or similar). If the erase/program operation **15** is finished before receiving any read operation **11**, the logic and the chip will both return to the idle state **17**. Identification of the read operation will be based on the regular and normal means that are supplied by the device (e.g. control signals, address

signals, read commands). Upon detection of the read operation **11** the automatic suspend logic **26** executes a process that enters the device into the suspend state **12**. The logic can use existing mechanisms inside the device to do this task (e.g. executing the suspend command which is available in certain devices). In addition – the logic may mark in a certain place (e.g. I/O port or a dedicated register) that the device has entered the automatic suspend state **12**. This marking can be used by the file system management S/W. In addition, the logic will indicate that the device is on its way to the automatic suspend state **12** using an external signal (Busy signal) **22**. This signal can be used by the platform to hold/retry the read operation **11** attempt or any other mechanism in the CPU/Bus that can delay execution of read/fetch cycles. The logic is also responsible of verifying that the device has actually entered the automatic suspend state **12**. After the verification phase – the Busy signal **22** will be turned off (to indicate that the device has entered the automatic suspend state **12**. From this moment onwards the device is ready to perform read requests as required.

#### 15 Automatic resume mechanism:

The automatic resume logic **27** starts to operate when the device enters the automatic suspend state **12**. The target of this logic is to resume the program/erase operation **15** that was interrupted by the automatic suspend logic **26**. This logic should monitor the read operations done from the device, for example, by using the same techniques as the automatic suspend logic **26**. The logic is responsible to resume the suspended operation. One suggested implementation is to wait for a break in the read operations of the device. When the break is long enough (depending on the application and environment) the logic executes a process which causes the device to resume the

program/erase operation **15** (e.g. executing the resume command which is available in certain devices). The logic contains some mechanism to determine if the break is a real break or just a temporary break (e.g. a timer that counts the no-read-operation time). The logic is also responsible to turn off the mark that shows (e.g. I/O port or a dedicated

5 register) that the device has entered the automatic suspend state **12**.

While the invention has been described with respect to a limited number of embodiments, it will be appreciated that many variations, modifications and other applications of the invention may be made.

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A system that executes code while processing data operations using a non-volatile memory device, comprising:

CPU/Bus/Controller for controlling said memory device;

non volatile array for holding code and data of said system;

non volatile device circuitry for controlling content and activity of said non volatile array; and

logic circuit for enabling automatic suspending and/or automatic resuming of operations.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said suspending and/or resuming of operations are initiated by a hardware means.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein said non-volatile memory device is a flash memory device.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein said logic circuit enables code execution and data storage/processing facilities within a single chip device with a single silicon die.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said logic circuit enables code execution and data storage/processing facilities within a bank of single memory chips with single silicon dies.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein said logic circuit is embedded into the memory chip.
7. The system of claim 1, wherein said logic circuit functions from outside the memory chip.
8. The system of claim 1, wherein a pluralism of said logic circuits are embedded into a memory chip.
9. The system of claim 1, wherein a pluralism of said logic circuits function outside a memory chip.
10. The system of claim 1, wherein said logic circuit is operative to monitor status of current operations in said memory chip.
11. The system of claim 1, wherein said logic circuit is operative to mark current status of chip operation so as to make it readable by the OS/application/file management software.
12. The system of claim 1, wherein said CPU/Bus/Controller causes said memory chip to suspend and/or resume operations by signaling to said memory chip to delay CPU /Bus/Controller read operation.

13. A method for executing code while processing data on a non-volatile memory

device, comprising the steps of:

- i. adding at least one logic circuit to operate with the non-volatile memory device.
- ii. monitoring status of current operations in said memory chip.
- iii. signaling to the CPU/Bus if the chip is available for code execution.
- iv. monitoring CPU/Bus activity
- v. commanding chip to suspend and/or resume chip operations.

14. A method for executing code while processing data on a non-volatile memory device, comprising the following steps:

- i. adding at least one logic circuit to work with the a non-volatile memory chip.
- ii. sensing read requests while chip is in program/erase mode/operation.
- iii. automatic entering of program and/or erase operations into suspend mode.
- iv. signaling to CPU/Bus to wait before executing further read/fetch commands.
- v. turning off signal to allow CPU/Bus to (automatically) continue with read/fetch commands
- vi. entering of said chip into resume operation to continue program/erase operation.

15. The method of claim 15, wherein said entering into suspend mode includes marking status for reading by OS/application/file management software in the chip.

16. A single flash memory device comprising:

a suspend logic circuit for enabling hardware initiated suspending of data processing

operations; and

a resume logic circuit for enabling hardware initiated resuming of data processing operations.

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**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A system and method for enabling concurrent usage of non-volatile memory for code execution and data storage/processing, comprising a hardware mechanism that can support automatic suspend and resume operations. This mechanism entails the integration of a suspend logic circuit and a resume logic circuit into the chip hardware, or the stationing of the logic chip in any way that it can operate together with the chip. This system and method enable a Flash memory chip to process code execution while it is processing erase/program operations, avoiding conflicts that ordinarily crash such a system. This is achieved by sensing the operation status of the chip and the CPU/Bus activity, and commanding the flash memory device to suspend and/or resume program/erase operations at appropriate times, so as not to conflict with read requests.

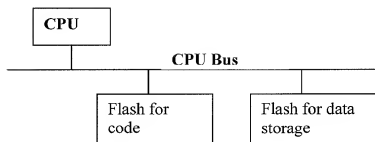


FIGURE 1

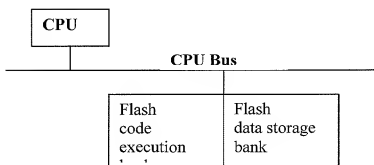


FIGURE 2

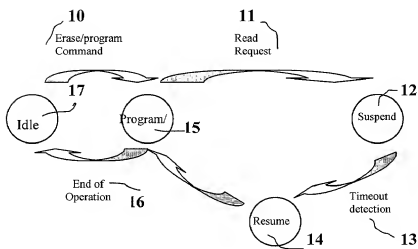


FIGURE 3

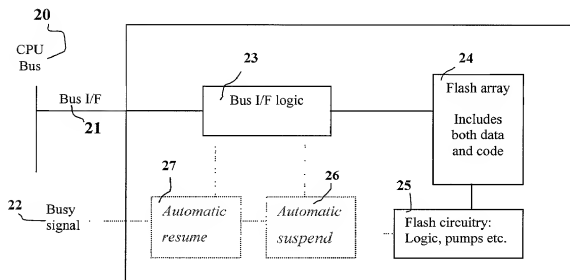


FIGURE 4

Combined Declaration For Patent Application and Power of Attorney

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name;  
I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ENABLING NON-VOLATILE MEMORY TO EXECUTE CODE WHILE OPERATING AS A DATA STORAGE/PROCESSING DEVICE., the specification of which  
(check one) ☒ is attached hereto.

☐ was filed on \_\_\_\_\_ as Application Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_ and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_. I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the patentability of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Claimed

(number) (Country) (Day, Month, Year Filed)

☐ Yes ☐ No

(number) (Country) (Day, Month, Year Filed)

☐ Yes ☐ No

(number) (Country) (Day, Month, Year Filed)

☐ Yes ☐ No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120 of any United States Application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.) (Filing Date)

Status  
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.) (Filing Date)

Status  
(patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby appoint the following attorneys, with full power of substitution, association, and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith.

Mark M. Friedman Registration No. 33,883

Address all Correspondence to:

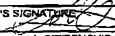
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Attorney Docket: 246/68  
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## Continuation of Combined Declaration For Patent Application and Power of Attorney

I hereby further declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statement may jeopardize the validity of the application of any patent issued thereon.

FULL NAME OF SOLE OR FIRST INVENTOR MOSHE GEFEN	INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE 	DATE 2/2/00
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POST OFFICE ADDRESS MIGDAL HALEVANON #8 MODIIN, 71700, ISRAEL		

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POST OFFICE ADDRESS MIRIAM HAHASHMONAIT 21, TEL-AVIV, 62032, ISRAEL		

FULL NAME OF THIRD INVENTOR AMIR BAN	INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE 	DATE 2/7/00
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POST OFFICE ADDRESS 34 BERNSTEIN-COHEN, RAMAT-HASHARON 47213, ISRAEL		

FULL NAME OF FOURTH INVENTOR	INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE
RESIDENCE	CITIZENSHIP ISRAELI	
POST OFFICE ADDRESS		

FULL NAME OF FIFTH INVENTOR	INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE
RESIDENCE	CITIZENSHIP ISRAELI	
POST OFFICE ADDRESS		

FULL NAME OF SIXTH INVENTOR	INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE
RESIDENCE	CITIZENSHIP ISRAELI	
POST OFFICE ADDRESS		

FULL NAME OF SEVENTH INVENTOR	INVENTOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE
RESIDENCE	CITIZENSHIP ISRAELI	
POST OFFICE ADDRESS		